(b) whether any steps have been taken by Government for protection of Indian students, keeping in view increasing incidents of attacks;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether victim students are being provided any economic assistance by Government; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) No, Sir. However, a few cases of attacks on Indian students in Australia have been reported.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The issue of attack on Indian students has been taken up with the Australian Government at the highest level. As a result of a series of discussions with visiting high level Australian delegations and demarches made by Indian Mission/Posts in Australia, the Australian Government has taken various steps, which have resulted in decrease of such attacks. To address the problems faced by Indian students in Australia and to recommend measures for enhancing their safety and wellbeing, the Government has set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) with the Australian side on student mobility. The JWG held its first meeting on 6th October, 2009.

Detailed advisory for Indian students who plan to study in Australia has been placed on the websites of MEA, MOIA and the Indian Mission and Consulates in Australia. Advisory to students who wish to study in certain other countries, have been placed on the website of MOIA.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Problem of CIC

1596. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recently held fourth anniversary convention of the Central and State Information Commissioners, has highlighted the problems faced by the CIC and its State units in terms of sparse office premises, lack of basic office equipments/furniture and manpower including low budgetary provisions; and

(b) considering the laudable role played by the Central Information Commission (CIC) as a window between Government and the citizenry, whether Government would ensure that the offices of the CIC and its State units are provided with basic amenities and manpower commensurate with the increasing volume of complaints/applications they handle daily under RTI Act?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Central Government has sanctioned 116 posts for the Central Information Commission. The Commission has constituted a Committee to assess its staff requirement. The Government shall examine the report of the Committee as and when received. The Commission has been allotted space in Delhi. A plot of land has also been allotted for construction of a building of the Commission. Staffing and providing accommodation and other facilities to the State Information Commissions are the responsibility of the State Governments. However, the Central Government is providing some assistance to the State Information Commissions under a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Information received under RTI

1597. SHRI SABIR ALI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only 27 per cent RTI applicants get the required information;

(b) if so, the action being taken to increase this level substantially;

(c) the details of Information Commissioners who have been ranked as best, average and bad in the field of RTI;

(d) whether it is also a fact that most of the Information Commissioners are exbureaucrats; and

(e) if so, the plan to being about balance in that field?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) The Government, through a media report, has come to know that a study has been conducted by the Public Cause Research Foundation about functioning of the Information Commissioners. The Study, according to the media report, concludes that a person filing an appeal with an Information Commission has 27% chance of getting information. However, as per the Annual Report of the Central Information Commission for the year 2006-2007, on an average, public authorities under different Ministries received 171,404 information requests, and rejected only 15,388 requests under the RTI Act. The Central Information Commission disposed off 68.45% of the appeals according to the CIC Annual Report. The Act has an inbuilt system of ensuring that the applicants get the requisite information. It provides that if a public information officer, without any reasonable cause, refuses to accept the application or does not furnish information within the prescribed time or knowingly give incorrect, incomplete or misleading information or destroys the information, the Information Commission may impose penalty on him. It may also recommend disciplinary action against the public information officer. The Commission may also require the concerned public authority to compensate the complainant.

(c) The Government does not rank statutory bodies such as the Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions.